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***The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón.*** Claudio Lomnitz Adler. Zone Books: New York, 2014. 594 pp.

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This fine book underscores the complexity of the crisis that led to the Mexican Revolution including the interplay of rural Mexican cultural values with emergent industrialization and the politics of working class, oligarchic and foreign interests. In this matrix the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) would play an important role, but as losers it and its adherents would be marginalized by a new hegemon with events reconstrued to suit the needs of the winners. The victors, an evolving coalition of forces led by regional elites, professionals, and more popular interests, that eventually comprised the new regime, and supported by the U.S. government, erased the anti-U.S. left-wing nationalism that emanated from below both before and during the struggle. Claudio Lomnitz does much to unravel the early phases of this conundrum.

Lomnitz begins with a convincing discussion of the public desire for liberty based on the empowerment of long-standing local governments, and a system of land ownership rooted in pueblo citizenship enforced by town jurisdictions in an overwhelmingly rural nation. The Mexican people deeply resented the rise of corrupt, personalized, and dictatorial, government and oligarchy that had taken place in the nearly half century since the expulsion of the French Empire in the 1860s. For more than a decade before the revolution of 1910, the leaders of the PLM and their personification, Ricardo Flores Magon, had praised Mexico's localized polities, often overlooking its shortcomings, and denounced the evils of the regime including its favoritism toward abusive great landowners in their disputes with peasants and especially its intimate ties to foreign capitalists including the National City and Morgan banks who controlled Mexico's financial system strategic resources and more than thirty percent of the nation's surface including most of its borderlands and coastlines.

In the years before the revolution, the PLM leadership called for the restoration of democracy as the national political objective, and an end to pomp and public ostentation on the part of what they regarded as the degenerate wealthy few, and they did this in the name of public decency. They referenced the freedoms promised by the Constitution of 1857 and the national leadership of that era, personified by President Benito Juarez, as the virtues to be fulfilled. They addressed a cross section of the public-- workers, peasants, and regional elites through newspapers like *Regeneración*. The author explains this complexity and underscores Ricardo's personal, less-widely acceptable, anarchist agenda vis a vis the more Liberal elements in the party leadership. He astutely identifies this early disagreement as the basis for the later discord between the more extreme PLM leaders and their initial and potent allies including nationalistic regional elites such as the Madero, Maytorena, and Pino Suarez families and the less obvious artisans and small-scale capitalists across rural Mexico.

Lomnitz also provides an outstanding coverage of the leftist and humanitarian supporters of the PLM. This has never been achieved before, despite the great works of James Cockcroft and Arnaldo Cordoba who decades ago respectively published *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution* and *La Ideología de la Revolución Mexicana*. Referring to Americans who worked with and alongside the PLM leadership as the "American Circle" Lomnitz underscores their love for Mexico, including landscape, climate, culture, and people; their efforts to help overthrow the dictatorship, and a good bit of their personal lives that even included impoverishment. The personal dimension is especially successful and gives the book a special impact beyond the usual political analysis. Ethel Duffy Turner lived out her life in Cuernavaca, while the Trowbridges, John Murray, and John Kenneth Turner all made commendable and important contributions to the Liberal cause. John Turner's book *Barbarous Mexico* could have been emphasized even more, because, despite his polemical aspects, Turner actually missed some of the direst aspects of the dictator's inhumane conduct causing his book to unimaginably become an understatement regarding the nearly genocidal horrors carried out in the Huasteca, Sonora, and the Sierra Madre Occidental.

Importantly, Lomnitz links the origins of revolutionary thought to the highly idealistic liberalism portrayed by Charles Hale in his great book *Liberalism in the Age of Morain* including jurists and intellectuals such as Ignacio Ramirez. As Mexico sank deeper into the pattern of lopsided wealth distribution and caste subordination, which characterizes underdevelopment and tyranny, those intellectual underpinnings would prove crucial to the ability to create a

massive public opposition movement. Explaining the importance of the daily work and political practices of auto gestion found in the ejidos and artisan patios across Mexico, however, would have helped the author to recognize the enduring importance of the Flores Magons after the idealistic initial stages of the revolution had turned into great battles, foreign intervention, and the writing of a new constitution.

Conservative and structuralist historians have minimized the PLM's importance while paying more attention to the elites and little to the rural masses who in fact labored with intense agendas. Echoing *Regeneración's* call for Mexico para los Mexicanos thousands of rural revolutionaries committed violent acts and voiced tens of thousands of complaints against U.S. citizens that owned infrastructure, timber and mining companies, rural estates, or just lived in colonies between 1910 and 1921. Those actions caused thousands of Americans to flee the country to refugee camps in New Orleans, Texas City, El Paso and San Diego. The PLM helped disseminate those perspectives that then carried forward during the later years of the revolution. When Ricardo died in 1923 throngs numbering in the hundreds of thousands underscored his importance by turning out in the towns and along the route taken by his cortege as it moved from the border to Mexico City. When his brother spoke about him in the Zocalo of Puebla that year the newspaper *Resurgimiento* published a picture of the crowd of 25,000.

Lomnitz explains how, during the early 1890s, an entire generation of students, attending the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM) began to openly challenge oligarchic land tenure, foreign ownership of infrastructure, and political dictatorship. They did this through art, legal and other writings, and public demonstrations. The Flores Magon brothers joined in and soon played prominent roles in the protests. Meanwhile, artists like Gerardo Murillo and Guadalupe Posada, stood out among a more generalized population of intellectual critics. While examining the underlying importance of Oaxacan social organization and cultural values on the Flores Magon brothers, the author rejects Enrique's idealized characterization of his childhood experience. Lomnitz points out that, contrary to bliss, the area where the Flores Magons grew up was marred by hacendado abuses of the villagers. While Enrique probably did intend the story to be taken literally by some readers, I suspect that more broadly he directed these "memories" for the knowledgeable Mexican reader of the times who understood the ideals the agrarian revolutionaries were seeking to achieve and would therefore appreciate his description metaphorically, as a representation of what many rural revolutionaries would soon seek openly.

By way of meticulous research this work represents a major step forward in our understanding of the differences of political agendas and ideology in the era of the Mexican Revolution. Lomnitz provides new insight for our appreciation of the spectrum of thought within the PLM and how it represented long obscured currents of popular thought in rural Mexico and among intellectuals.